

LAWRENCE, J. B.

INTERVIEW

#4000

473

Fink, Maude M.
Field Worker
May 10, 1937

474

Interview with Mr. J. B. Lawrence
416 S. 7th. Clinton, Oklahoma.
Born, November 10, 1861. Texas.
Father-Logan L. Lawrence
Mother-Mary Johnston.

The mail line was from Dodge City, Kansas to Henryetta, Texas, went by the way of Anadarko and Fort Sill. Another mail line was from Dodge City southwest and this went by way of Moleta, Texas. There was another mail line from East Arbuckle Mountains to Fort Sill. The mail was carried in stage coaches.

The roads were mostly trails; no roads were kept in shape except the roads over which the mail went. There were four horses to a stage coach. Every thirty miles they had camp, this was to take care of the animals and make a change of horses.

There was an Indian Mission for the Indians at Anadarko, but it has been abandoned.

For food they had mostly beef, potatoes, canned goods, and sour dough biscuits.

People lived in dugouts and tents. The people that were here were employed by the Government and by cattlemen. They would stretch a tent up to live in, just anything for a cover. Some even stayed under wagon beds. The stage camps were all dugouts.

-2-

Mr. Lawrence lived on Red river at the border of Texas and Oklahoma. He came to Oklahoma in 1880. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians were here. Mr. Lawrence came over on horseback. The Indians traveled altogether on horseback.

The Indians would move on horseback. They would get them a hide and tie it to two poles, then they would tie one end of the poles to the horse and the end with the hide on it would drag. They would turn the horse loose and let him follow the other horses. In this hide, the Indians would put all of their possessions. The Indians always had a bunch of dogs, if there were some little puppies that was not large enough to walk, they would put them in the hide and take them along.

Mr. Lawrence was seventeen years old when he came to Indian Territory. He settled on the line of ^{the} Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations.

He worked on a ranch for a cattleman. Oklahoma City in the early days was known as No Man's land. Mr. Payne got soldiers to settle it, but the government would not let them. The Government would not sign the papers. These people were poor people, they were paupers. Kansas and Texas would not have them. Then finally Payne died and Mr. Smith took it up

and put it over. The people disbanded before the country was opened up in 1889.

Mr. Lawrence had the first cattle shipped out of Oklahoma. The railroad could get only stockyard and ~~depot~~ plots. Mr. Lawrence shipped five hundred cattle to Chicago before the country was opened. He received four and a half a hundred for them.

When Mr. Lawrence came to this country, the prairie grass was as high as a man's head. The country was covered with cattle; there were no pastures; they had open range; people were here for cattle raising.

Mr. Lawrence made the run himself. A bunch of people came in a company and camped on the line until the morning of the opening. The Government had soldiers to patrol the line all the time to keep the people back. The Government notified the people through the soldiers. On the day of the opening, people were standing thick for miles around. The Government kept spotters out until they all could come. They wanted it to be fair to one and all. The Government had allotted the Indians land before settlement. The Indians had the choice of the country, and the white man got what was left.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians were brought into this country from the Northern States. They did not like this country, so they started back to the Northern States. Custer and two more men started after them to get them to return to the territory. After these three men had gone a distance they decided to break up, each going different ways. It was understood that when they came upon the Indians they would not attempt to turn them back themselves, but would send after the other two. Custer was a high-strung man and liked to have all honors. These men did not realize the Indians would have spies out. These Indian spies got Custer and his men and murdered them. The Indians took their long bladed knives and scalped the men with Custer, but for Custer's bravery and respect, they took his cape and spread it over his face. This was known as Custer's Massacre.

Mr. Lawrence's first house was two tents, with dirt floors and no windows.

He had a hundred and fifty steers, and he had no money until he fattened them up for the market.

He lived on the bank of the Washita river, fourteen miles west of Clinton. Later he built a house and had good store bought furniture. He bought his furniture in

Ardmore, He used a box stove, wood was plentiful, used kerosene lamps. They got water for drinking purposes out of the Washita river, but finally dug wells, and also built cisterns. The first wells were dug with pick and shovel.

Mr. Lawrence was a cattleman, and he kept his cattle built up all the time. When he sold any cattle, he would buy more. In this way he tried to have a better breed of cattle.

The early crops were kaffir corn, all kinds of feed crops, prairie grass, millet and some wheat. They freighted their wheat to El Reno and sold it for thirty cents a bushel.

The county stores at the county seat would freight all goods from El Reno by team. This took several days to make the trip.

In the fall of the year they would go to El Reno for their winter supplies; and the same thing in the spring of the year, they would go after their summer supplies.

Mr. Lawrence had some personal friends among the Indians, one of whom is still living, Mr. Kias.

There were turkeys and a few deer here. Plenty ^{of} fish were in the Washita river, but they did not catch very many of them. In those times they did not know what fish hooks were.

Mr. Lawrence's father and mother are buried in Oklahoma,
near Loca.

The early newspapers were the Arapaho Bee and Dallas
News.